

## **Seven Secrets to Employee Engagement (Hint: It's NOT about the Benjamins)**

By Roxanne Emmerich

If you've seen the movie *Jerry Maguire*, you'll remember the scene where Tom Cruise asks Cuba Gooding, Jr., "What can I do for you?" Gooding says, "Show me the money."

Many employers think that's the key to employee engagement. But any company that THINKS you have to pour money on employees to get them engaged will write off employee engagement efforts during tough economic times. "We just can't afford to do it right now," they say.

In fact, **you can't afford NOT to pay attention to engagement**, *especially* when the wind is howling outside. Employee engagement scores regularly account for up to 50 percent of the variance in customer service scores. A disengaged employee can cost you 30 TIMES as much in safety-related incidents. And disengaged employees are over 85 percent more likely to leave.

A 2006 study by the Gallup Management Journal found that engaged employees make up an average 29 percent of a company's workforce, leaving a startling 71 percent who are "not engaged" or "actively disengaged." (*Cue offstage scream.*)

Engagement comes not from dollars but from more personal factors. Here are seven things that will help your employees stay engaged for the long term:

- 1. An employer who cares enough to listen.** The best way to know what your employees need and expect is to ask them—and to listen carefully to their answers.
- 2. Clear, consistent expectations.** Vague policies and unclear expectations can make employees feel irritated, unsafe, even paranoid. And yes, disengaged. They click into survival mode instead of focusing on how to help the company succeed.
- 3. A sense of the importance of their work.** This has a greater impact on loyalty and customer service than all other factors COMBINED.
- 4. Opportunities for advancement.** The chance to work your way up the ladder is a tremendous incentive for productivity, bonding, and engagement.
- 5. Good relationships with others in the workplace—especially the supervisor.** If that relationship is toxic, you can forget about asking the employee to put his shoulder to the wheel for the company.
- 6. Regular feedback.** If you want to keep them moving forward, give employees the occasional rudder report. And don't forget *positive* feedback, which should ideally outnumber the negative by about 5 to 1.

**7. Celebration and rewards for success.** Set realistic targets, then reward and celebrate when they are reached. And don't wait for the end of a big project to celebrate. Pick landmarks along the way and go nuts when you hit them.

## **Moving from "The Company" to "Our Company"**

The heart and soul of engagement is *ownership*. As long as your employees feel they are working to help YOU make YOUR company succeed, engagement will be low. Once you get them to see themselves as partners in the endeavor—making decisions, staying informed, sharing in the company's ups and downs—everything changes. Engagement soars.

*Roxanne Emmerich is renowned for her ability to transform “ho-hum” workplaces into massive results-oriented “bring-it-on” environments. To discover how you can ignite the passion of your employees, catapult performance to new levels, and boost the morale of your company subscribe to the Thank God It's Monday<sup>TM</sup> e-zine at [www.ThankGoditsMonday.com](http://www.ThankGoditsMonday.com).*